

High Rise Trellises Proposed

Creating largest vertical garden

(AP)— They haven't figured out yet how to get the pruning done, but architects and federal officials plan one of the world's most extensive vertical gardens in downtown Portland — what amounts to a series of 250-foot-tall trellises designed to shade the west side of an 18-story



A computer generated image shows a series of 250-foot-tall trellises designed to shade the west side of the 18-story Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building, downtown.

hoisted and lowered on platforms. Rainwater collected on the roof, supplemented by city water, will be piped for irrigating the green wall, he said.

Construction is expected to take 30 to 40 months. Federal workers are beginning to move to temporary quarters.

The General Services Administration, landlord for federal office buildings, lists other energy-efficient features: Elevators that generate electricity on the way down, solar arrays on the roof, smart lighting systems that adjust to the daylight available, using some of the collected rainwater to flush toilets.

The building's three other walls will have less striking treatments: shades on the south and east walls and windows that drink in the indirect north light.

The building's roof will stick out — about 20 feet — and look like a giant mortarboard. The overhang is designed for shade.

But attention is likely to turn quickly to the plans for a greened-up west wall.

Sean Hogan, writer, nursery owner and garden designer who worked on a green wall several years ago for the parking garage at Portland's airport said irrigation and plant selection will be critical to keeping a green wall green in Portland's summers.

Despite its national reputation as a drizzly place, the city's climate is Mediterranean, with warm to hot temperatures from late spring to early fall and little rainfall. Garden irrigation is commonplace.

"Trust me, it will be a challenge," said Randy Gragg, former architecture critic for The Oregonian newspaper and editor of Portland Monthly magazine. "It will get baked, absolutely."

The idea of vertical gardens has a root in antiquity — the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, probably near Baghdad, were in legend one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Their existence and extent, however, are in question.

building

It is not a new idea to use greenery vertically as "living architecture," running plants up the sides of a building to keep it cool, but the wall of the Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building would stand out.

The architects' plans call for seven vertical "vegetated fins" to jut at acute angles. The fins would be the metal framework for planters and the greenery sprouting from them.

The west wall is 150 feet long, making the expanse to be shaded about three-quarters the size of an NFL playing field, minus the end zones.

The work is part of a \$135 million remodeling, with most of the money from federal stimulus funds. It is the largest single stimulus project announced so far in Oregon. The U.S. General Services Administration says its goal is to create a "landmark high-performance building."

The green wall concept is familiar to anyone who has planted a deciduous tree or used a vine-covered trellis on the west side of the house: In the summer the leaves provide cooling shade; in the winter, the bare limbs and stems admit comforting light.


"If you think about it, it's a planter every 25 feet," architect Don Eggleston said. "A lot of people have 10-foot trellises in their gardens."

Eggleston's firm, SERA Architects, is working on some questions that weekend gardeners never have to figure out: what plants will grow readily at more than 200 feet in the air and how to water, fertilize, weed and prune at that height.

The pruning might be done in much the same way windows are washed, he said, with workers

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Oregon License CO-3644
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EMMANUEL Church of God in Christ United
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